

# Positive Approaches to Supporting People on the Autism Spectrum: looking, listening, and learning

## TRAINING SUMMARY:

“Positive Approaches” has been defined as a set of attitudes to invite all people to take each other seriously and respectfully. Rather than a pre-established collection of answers to behavior that challenges us, it offers a guide for asking meaningful questions about a person’s quality of life and encourages us to observe and listen closely for answers. Positive Approaches takes an ecological perspective on human differences, recognizing that “behavior” is not “in” a person but emerges dynamically through a web of environments and relationships. By looking and listening respectfully, we can learn to change and improve those dynamics. In contrast, reliance on isolating and highly controlling approaches that work on people, rather than with people, can lead to unwanted side-effects, foreclose investigation of what a challenging behavior is communicating, and create a perceived need for continued isolation and control. Positive Approaches helps us move beyond the Medical or Readiness Model of disability treatment to a deeper understanding that inclusion, relationships, and honoring personal dreams must be our starting point rather than a distant or receding goal.

## TRAINING GOAL:

The goal of this training is for parents, professionals, and community members to explore common attitudes and misperceptions about challenging behavior; to consider a range of social, emotional, communicative, physiological, and health-related factors and needs that may be reflected in a person’s behavior; and to achieve an understanding of Positive Approaches and an awareness that they can succeed for all persons whose behavior is considered challenging.

## TRAINING OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of the training are for the participants to:

1. Understand the concept of Positive Approaches and what it means to take an ecological approach to behavior
2. Consider the importance of relationships, typical experiences, and typical environments in alleviating common causes of challenging behavior
3. Investigate ways to support and enhance self-determination, and appreciate the challenges that may arise when individuals lack control and influence over their lives
4. Consider how both physical and mental illness may be misunderstood as misbehavior, and the kinds of clues that can lead to appropriate identification of the problem
5. Become aware of the range of neurologically-based nonvolitional (non-willed) behaviors, common misperceptions about why they occur, and Positive Approaches to alleviating their impact
6. Understand why interventions that are coercive, demeaning, or cause fear or pain have no place in an educational, support, or treatment plan, and can lead to dangerous and damaging side-effects
7. Appreciate why relationships are powerful and fundamental elements in the implementation of Positive Approaches

**METHODS TO ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES:**

Training content can be delivered via webinar incorporating lecture and discussion (app. 1½ hours). This training also can be delivered in person in a traditional training or classroom setting incorporating lecture, videos, discussion, and interactive group exercises (2-3 hours).

**PREPARATION AND MATERIALS NEEDED:**

PowerPoint

Copies of the non-annotated PowerPoint are participant handouts.

Annotated PowerPoint is Trainer's Guide.

test involving short essay questions is available.